



DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

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TO: The Secretary  
FROM: EA - Philip C. Habib

Useful Previous Statements on Aid to Viet Nam

We have taken a fast look at the record in response to your request for some examples of possibly useful quotations that were made on aid to Viet Nam at the time of the Paris Agreement. We will continue our efforts to get a more definitive reading on such statements.

1. Congressional Statements.

(a) Following the President's briefing on the Paris Agreement, Chairman Mahon of the House Appropriations Committee said "it is inherent in the cease-fire that we will continue to provide assistance to South Viet Nam and rehabilitation assistance to North Viet Nam." He said this must be accepted as a fact of life, and "is a better alternative than continuation of the war." (WP, 1/28/73)

(b) Gwertzman (NYT, 2/22/73), reporting on Secretary Rogers' appearance before "an unusually cordial session" of the Foreign Relations Committee on the Laos cease fire, said most of the members of the Committee "seemed to echo the views of the majority leader Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, who told Mr. Rogers that he would personally support aid to Hanoi as a "price that should be paid for the Viet Nam settlement."

2. Press Comments.

(a) 2/9/73 - On your departure for Asia, the NYT said Asian governments should be assured that the US, along with other developed nations, will accept responsibility for postwar rehabilitation and continuing economic development in a battle-scarred part of the world.

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(b) We note that a summary of editorial comment prepared by PA reported that practically all editorial comment in early 1973 voiced clear support for a US contribution to Indochina reconstruction, with 31 out of 39 representative newspapers supporting aid for reconstruction in North Viet Nam. As you know, there have been a number of more recent favorable press comments, some of which are given below:

(c) WP (1/10/75) hoped Congress will "listen, and question carefully" the President's appeal for more aid. Congress should understand that some consequences of the US being seen letting Thieu go would involve turmoil and recrimination at home and a certain devaluing of US credibility abroad.

(d) CSM (1/8/75) said the US cannot "cut and run" in Viet Nam. Congress drastically cut aid in its weariness to be done with the problem; the effect has been salutary since Saigon was forced to stand on own feet, but the cutback appears to be hurting too much. The Administration's call for supplementary aid to SVN should be looked at "responsibly" by Congress. If the USSR and China do not exercise more restraint in supplying VN, the US must act accordingly. However much the US public longs to have done with SVN, it is a responsibility from which they cannot walk away.

(e) S-N (1/7/75) notes that the US made a big investment in war against communism in Indochina. Congress must ask whether it wants to deny these people the right to defend themselves against brutal aggression.

(f) WSJ (1/8/75) says the ARVN can defend itself, but with difficulty because of the US aid slash. Whatever mistakes and overreactions US policymakers may have been guilty of, continued NVA assaults confirmed the diagnosis persistently offered by Dean Rusk: "The problem is that Hanoi won't leave its neighbors alone."

### 3. Statements by Administration Leaders.

The record of course contains many statements by senior US officials, including statements by yourself and other senior Department officers, both on the Hill and in other public forums for the past two years on the need for continuing US

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support for the GVN after signing of the Paris Agreement.

(a) For example, in his January 23, 1973, address to the nation announcing the signing of the Paris Agreement, President Nixon said "we shall continue to aid South Viet Nam within the terms of the Agreement and we shall support efforts by the people of South Viet Nam to settle their problems peacefully among themselves."

(b) In your press conference of January 24, 1973, you were asked about the provision in the Agreement permitting replacement of armaments, munitions, and war material. You noted that if for any reason the war should start at any level, it would be an unfair restriction on our South Vietnamese allies to prohibit them from replacing their weapons if their enemies are able to do so. Therefore, the degree to which these weapons will be replaced "will depend on the degree to which there is military activity." You added that if other countries do not introduce massive military equipment into Viet Nam, "we do not consider it an end in itself to give military aid. But we believe it would be unfair and wrong for one country to be armed by its allies while the other one has no right to do so. This is what will govern our actions."

(c) In your CBS interview with Marvin Kalb (2/1/73) you noted that "it has always been part of American policy -- indeed it was first established by the late President Johnson -- that at some point, the United States would contribute to a reconstruction program for all of Indochina..."

Asked how you would define the nature and depth of the American commitment to Saigon now that the peace agreement has been signed, you noted that we have a responsibility to give those who were our allies, "an opportunity to shape their own future. Therefore, we have had a responsibility to continue a program of economic assistance along the lines that have been developed." You said that we will also continue that degree of military assistance that the agreement permits and which is made necessary by the military situation.

Drafted: EA/P:AH Rosen:eb  
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